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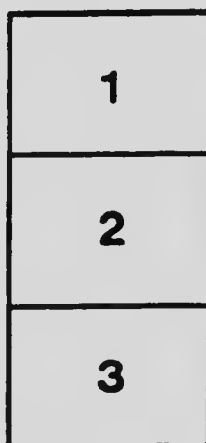
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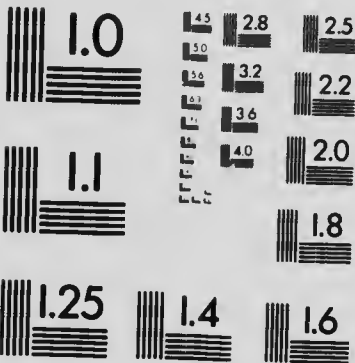
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REVIEWS WORK OF SESSION

Premier McBride Sums Up Results Accomplished by Legislature and Deals With Salient Features of Many Important Measures Passed.

(Victoria Colonist, May 3, 1908.)

"It is a little late, is it not?" queried Premier McBride, as the representative of the Colonist asked him for a review of the work of the late session of the legislature.

"Better late than never," was the response, "besides, good things are always in season."

"I have no objection, if you have not," was the Premier's further remark; "but," with a merry twinkle in his eye, "if the Colonist is accused of publishing belated news, the responsibility is on you, not on me."

"We cheerfully accept the responsibility," remarked the Colonist representative, and, with this prologue, the interview was proceeded with.

"There were two things about the late session that especially pleased me," began Mr. McBride. "The first was, it was short, sharp and decisive, to use a familiar election phrase. The second was that the average standard of debate was higher than it ever has been in my experience of the House; and, what is still more gratifying, the amenities of debate were, with a very few exceptions, well observed."

"I suppose it might be well in dealing with a general review of the work of the session, which was of a most important character throughout, to consider it under the different heads under which the various measures might fall—such as finance, agriculture, mining, labor, education, land, timber, and so on."

The Treasury.

"To begin with finance, the minister in charge of that department, Captain

Tatlow, presented a highly gratifying budget, introduced one or two measures that have met with much favor, and made announcements of other good things in prospect. The careful guardianship of the treasury, the exercise of economies in the public service wherever possible, and the general reorganization of the finances, together with the opening up of new sources of revenue, have restored the credit of the province, and placed it higher than it ever was before; and have also not only greatly increased the revenues and afforded substantial surpluses, but have led to an extraordinary reduction of debt in a very short time. These results have been very gratifying to the government, and I need not say to the country as well. It has been possible, as a consequence, to reduce taxation in several directions, and to increase the appropriations for new and needed public works. The province is now in a position in which it never was before to prepare for the opening up of what I have called 'New British Columbia,' to undertake surveys on a considerable and systematic basis, and to meet the further responsibilities that the advent of new lines of transcontinental railways will impose, the nature of which I need not discuss. As I have stated on many previous occasions, the success of our financial policy, the putting to rest of political turmoil arising out of unsettled conditions, and the general trend of our legislation and administration, have had a direct effect upon the activities of the coun-



try in restoring confidence and creating prosperity. We do not claim all the credit for the good times we have had, and the unexampled progress of the past few years, but I do say the government of the province, in the ways I have indicated, has largely contributed to those ends."

Agriculture.

"Before leaving the work of Captain Tatlow, it would be well to refer to his other department, namely, that of agriculture. The high honors obtained by repeated exhibitions of fruit in the middle west, and in Great Britain, have greatly stimulated the industry. We know now that we have a commercial future in fruit-growing all our own in Canada, and I look to this country becoming one of the very best and greatest producers in the Empire. A special feature of the policy of the department has been to carefully guard the fruit of the province from pests and diseases of all kinds, and another is to encourage the best methods of cultivation, packing and shipping. These efforts have placed British Columbia in a very favored position in the markets. Agriculture generally has advanced with rapid strides. An immense amount of information has been furnished through the Bureau of Provincial Information, and the Department of Agriculture, in the form of bulletins and otherwise in response to enquiries, which are constantly on the increase."

"Notwithstanding the criticism directed against the Government in connection with its endeavors to supply the pressing demands for farm labor, through the agency of the Salvation Army, these have been productive of excellent results. The recent arrivals of immigrants, brought out by that organization, have all been located, and so far as we know are giving good satisfaction. The demand is for still more, showing that we are supplying a real need of the country. The mistake made by the critics of this movement is in supposing that the government was displacing existing labor, and aiding in reducing wages by competition of newcomers. We were very careful in guarding the interests of labor by restricting the arrangement with the Salvation Army to farm labor and domestic help. There has been a crying demand for several years for labor to meet the special requirements of the agricultural community, and it was the bounden duty of the government to do what it could to relieve the situation.

Railway Legislation

"I presume, in the present circumstances, you would say that our legislation with respect to railways was

amongst the most important of the session, and I agree with you. The act confirming the agreement with the Grand Trunk Pacific with reference to the settling of terminals at Prince Rupert, the recognition of the rights of the province to the Indian reserve in that vicinity, the excellent bargain made whereby the province secures participation in the values of real estate, and at the same time guaranteed the immediate construction of the railway from this end, with purchase of all supplies from our own people, are all considerations of great importance, and mean millions of money to British Columbia in the end, without, too, cost to the Government. It is true that we give the Grand Trunk Pacific exemption from taxation for ten years in their main and branch lines, but in the aggregate that will amount to but a small proportion of the revenues to be derived from real estate at Prince Rupert. In a word, the provincial government was able to, and did, secure to the province what the Dominion government should have stipulated for four years ago and did not. The federal authorities juggled with the question in such a way as to make the people on the coast believe that they were going to have a railway immediately, whereas four years have elapsed without a road being turned.

Railway Assessment

"Another measure was the railway assessment act, whereby the government is enabled to enter into negotiations with railway companies for the immediate construction of railways in the province without having to wait for the meeting of the legislature, on the basis of exemption from taxation for ten years. By entering into an arrangement with the Esquimalt and Nanaimo railway the government was able to insure the commencement of the extension of the line to Alberni. As the government has to lay all the papers connected with any such agreement, made under the authority of this act, before the house within ten days after its opening, there is little or no opportunity of the power vested in the executive being abused, even if that body were inclined to take advantage of such opportunity. No government could afford to depart from the well-understood policy of the legislature, and on the other hand it is sometimes possible, as it was in the instance referred to, to greatly facilitate railway construction as a consequence of this power. It is well to state here that the fair wage clause inserted in the act fully protects the workmen of the province, and, so long as this government is in power we shall see that this clause is

observed and that only railways shall participate in the proposed benefits which respect it and employ white labor.

University Bill

"Important bills were also introduced by Hon. Dr. Young. I refer to the university bill and the bill reorganizing the civil service. The preparation and presentation of the details of these won many encomiums from both sides of the house and from the country. The university bill of last session was well thought out in every detail, and guarantees that when the doors of the institution are opened it will be found modern in every respect. It will be sufficiently endowed to make it a competitor with any of the leading schools of the Dominion, and worthy of the great province of which it will be the intellectual centre. It is the intention, as explained by the minister of education, to make it practical as well as academical in its curriculum, so as to render the training received applicable to the expert development of our rich and varied resources, particularly those represented in mining and agriculture. Next session we shall, in all probability, be in a position to supplement and complete the steps already taken for which the authority of the legislature was obtained.

Civil Service Measure

"In reference to the civil service bill, it gives effect to a policy which the government has had in view ever since it came into office. In making appointments, either new or to fill vacancies, we have steadily kept in mind the principle of promotion, and almost invariably acted upon it, but the service has grown to such proportions that it was desirable that the members should be properly classified, and promotions and salaries regulated according to a system in which merit and priority of service should be the chief and the only considerations.

"Great satisfaction resulted from the announcement in the house by the minister of education that a step would be taken in the direction of supplying free school books. This, it must be remembered, is limited at present to readers, but other text books will be supplied at cost. The government has not adopted this as a final policy but is making an experiment which is likely to become a permanent feature of the educational system. Mr. Wilson, one of the inspectors, will have charge of the distribution of these books which will begin with the ending of the present fiscal year.

The Natal Act

"As you know, the discussion of the Natal act, and many matters incidental

to the question of exclusion of Oriental labor, were prominently before the house and were productive of the best and the most stirring debates, in fact, the greater part of the session in its early stages was occupied in connection with these matters, the constitutional issues which arose out of the action of the lieutenant-governor, and the competency of the legislature to deal with such matters at all. Whether or not the Natal act, as passed by the legislature, is to remain effective, is a question for the courts to decide. It will not be allowed to rest until the court of last appeal, the judicial committee of the council of England, has given its decision. Any event the government has shown its desire to deal effectively with the evil of Asiatic immigration and has fulfilled its promises to the electors in this respect to the letter. We have done all we could have done, and must leave the responsibility where it will belong. The action of the government and the legislature has had this effect—it has brought the question prominently before the people of the country and has forced the Dominion government to take action it is certain from its general disposition and well known policy regarding Orientals it would not otherwise have taken.

The Fisheries

"I might mention that the attorney-general made some important announcements with reference to the various appeals which will be made to the privy council in connection with issues of grave state concern which have arisen between the province and the Dominion, including the validity of the Natal act, the right of the province to administer water rights within the Dominion railway belt, the long-standing fisheries question, and the question of Indian reserves, etc. Perhaps the one of greatest public interest is the determination of the rights of the province in regard to fisheries. The relations of the province and the Dominion in regard to this matter have been most unsatisfactory for years, and it seems quite impossible to get the Dominion government to make a settlement. The only attempt to negotiate on their part was shown in the recent visit of Mr. Bastedo, but the suggestions conveyed through him were quite impossible of acceptance, and the only course open to the government was to assert its rights by assuming control and allowing the issues to be fought out in the courts. The attorney-general has proved most energetic, careful and competent, in dealing with the immense amount of work which has devolved upon him by reason of the many important questions coming before his department.

"The policy of the government with regard to mining has been to leave that industry severely alone so far as amendments to the present very satisfactory acts are concerned. This attitude on the part of the mines department has been to give increased confidence to investors that their investments and interests will not be interfered with or rendered unstable by legislation which was in former years changed from year to year, which, as a consequence, frequently left the mine owner in a very uncertain state as to his rights. The mining industry is in a very prosperous condition, and the output this year remains much larger than before."

"There was only one act of special comment, which may be regarded as affecting mining interests, and that was the loan authorized by the legislature to assist in establishing an experimental plant at Nelson for the purpose of treating zinc-lead ores. This was heartily approved of by both the government and opposition members. In view of the possibilities of treating this class of ore, in case the experiment proves successful, it will be many times worth what it will cost the government, although we do not expect to take much risk in that respect.

Coal Tax Act.

There is another measure which, though it affects the mining industry, is really more a matter of finance. I refer to the bill abolishing all royalties on coal and placing a straight tax of 10 cents per ton on coal and 15 cents per ton on coke. This will substantially increase the revenue without incurring any hardships on the coal operators, and will fairly apportion the incidence of taxation. The royalty which is imposed, for instance, on the Crow's Nest Pass mines could not by law be imposed on the old Vancouver Island mines, as there were operated before the royalty came in force. Now all mines are on the same basis.

"I must not forget to refer to the change authorized by the act amending the constitution to be made in the department of lands and works. This important office is to be divided, and a minister appointed to take charge of lands, and another of public works. This has been found necessary owing to the tremendous increase of work under both these branches of the service, particulars of which I gave when the bill was under discussion.

Timber Industry.

"With reference to the legislation in regard to questions connected with the lands and works department, the course in placing a reserve on the timber lands of the province; the decision

to investigate carefully the conditions which exist affecting the timber industry for the purpose of framing sound, permanent, policy; the cautious but wise amendments introduced by Mr. Fulton to the Land act, and the move in the direction of effective legislation with respect to irrigation and public control of water rights, were all decidedly in the public interests.

"The discussion of labor resolutions and legislation occupied an unusually large amount of time as before remarked. Incidentally, a number of the measures, both public and private, involved labor interests, and in each case care was taken to conserve them as far as possible. On the whole, I do not think that labor has any reason to complain of the action of the legislature, or of the government, with respect to matters in which it is specially interested. The policy of the government in this respect has been to act fairly to both capital and labor, and in that course I am quite sure the greatest measure of justice will be done and the largest public benefit ensured. Among the special measures enacted were, as I have stated, the Fair Wage clause, which is included in all the railway legislation, the Factories act, introduced and passed through the house by Mr. McPhillips, the Shops Regulation act, and the Natal act.

Better Terms.

"These are, I think, the principal things to which I have to refer as relating to the late session," concluded the premier, "with the exception that I might refer to the resolution passed re-affirming the position of the province with respect to better terms. There is no change in the attitude of the government on that important subject. I do not expect that the present government at Ottawa will re-open the question, because Sir Wilfrid has definitely and unequivocally given his decision; but I have every reason to believe that Mr. Borden, if elected, will take up the subject and investigate it on the lines we desire. We shall continue the agitation until either the government at Ottawa is forced to reconsider their decision, or there is a change in government. We have no desire to make it a party question whatever, but as Mr. Borden has always promised to give the province a commission of inquiry, as asked for, and if we cannot get any further redress from Sir Wilfrid Laurier's administration, the question will necessarily assume a political aspect and will be forced into the political arena as one of the issues between the province and the Dominion which must be fought out at the polls."



